

WESTPORT

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Babina said he used to carry the phones around in a container, but one day in 2020, he decided to put the few on display in his bedroom. And it has continued to grow.

He said it was in his room until about July 2020, and then he kept moving it to various spaces in his house. He eventually moved it into the large room it's currently in.

Babina said before COVID-19, he showed some friends his collection, and they brushed it off. After almost two years, his friends saw it again and were much more impressed with the collection.

"I can't believe I spent three years doing this," he said. "I feel very happy with what it's become."

Babina said he gets most of the electronics from eBay, but he also frequents flea markets, yard sales and estate sales. He added about half of his collection is from donations from family members and people around Westport. To afford his collection, Babina said he has his own eBay business.

He said he has thought about moving the Westport Tech Museum to a public facility, but he enjoys being able to work on it at his house. He said he usually spends about three hours a week working on the room, constantly reorganizing it and fixing labels for each of the pieces.

Babina is planning on going to college, so he said he may have to move it to somewhere public, which is one of his goals.

In the future, he said he hopes to keep expanding his collection. He has a list on his website showing what he's looking for, so interested donors can reach out to him there.

Babina said he wants an Apple Lisa and the original NeXT computer, among everything else on his website.



Brian A. Pounds/Hearst Connecticut Media

Jay Babina, 17, invokes the famous pose used by Apple Computer's Steve Jobs in the advertisement for the Macintosh computer at his museum of technology in his home in Westport.

He said he would even accept anything donated that isn't on the list.

"Everything up here is special to me," Babina said.

Some of the items are even family heirlooms, like one of the radios, which his family used to listen to the news of the Pearl Harbor attack.

Much of Babina's collection is functional, too. He can even play the former President Franklin D. Roosevelt Pearl Harbor speech on the radio, through its speakers.

As for favorites, Babina said he loves all of the computers, but especially likes the Commodore Amiga. He also likes the Magnavox Odyssey, which is the first commercial home video game console.



Jay Babina's museum of technology, The Westport Tech Museum, in his home in Westport.

APPEAL

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law, the state's Freedom of Information Commission ordered Bridgeport to release unredacted police reports to Deonte Tomlinson, who is serving 53 years in state prison.

"I'm at a loss," Commissioner Christopher Hankins said at the March 8 meeting. "I don't want to hurt innocent people because of Bridgeport's failure to comply with the law."

City officials declined to comment on the lawsuit.

Russell Blair, the FOI Commission's director of education and communications, issued a brief statement on the case.

"We are disappointed that Bridgeport has chosen to appeal," Blair wrote in the statement. "The commission believes it got the decision right and will make the case on behalf of its decision to the Superior Court."

Three years ago, Tomlinson filed a public records request with the city for documents related to his arrest.

The city did not respond to the request for 13 months, prompting Tomlinson to file a complaint with the FOIC in April 2021.

After hearing from Tomlinson and city officials in December 2021, an FOIC hearing officer determined in November 2022 the records Tomlinson requested were public documents that the city must turn over in their entirety and that Bridgeport violated the law by withholding them.



Ned Gerard/Hearst Connecticut Media

Deonte Tomlinson, 19, is arraigned in Superior Court in Bridgeport on May 16, 2016. Tomlinson is charged with the murder of Khalil Diaz, 17, in Bridgeport on May 13, 2016.

When the hearing officer's order came before the FOIC for consideration at the commission's March 8 meeting, the attorney representing the city revealed for the first time in the three-year records battle that city officials had only recently pulled the records and now planned to redact the documents before releasing them.

"No other town comes in here and says, 'We want another opportunity after the order is issued to redact records.' They redact, and they claim their exemption, and then they have that exemption argued and heard before a hearing officer," Commission Chairman Owen Eagan told the city's attorney.

In a unanimous vote, the commissioners ordered the city to release the records unredacted within 30 days.

In its lawsuit, the city argues the commission's order to turn over unredacted information to Tomlinson exceeds its legal authority

and the original order did not require Bridgeport to release unredacted material.

Bridgeport's noncompliance with the state's public records law was highlighted by a Hearst Connecticut Media investigation earlier this year. The series outlined Bridgeport's history of stonewalling residents' public record requests and a growing backlog of about 2,000 open requests that has left many residents waiting years for access to public documents.

Over the past decade, Bridgeport has violated the state's transparency laws more than any other municipality. But Hearst Connecticut Media found there are seldom serious repercussions because state law gives the FOIC blunt enforcement tools.

Hours after publication, Mayor Joe Ganim vowed the city would improve compliance with the public records law and speed up its processing of requests.

FOI

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Hearst Connecticut Media recently exposed how Bridgeport officials delay and deny public records requests as a matter of daily routine. The investigation found that the city's most populous city was routinely in violation of state law when it came to public records requests. Bridgeport officials responded, vowing to make changes, while lawmakers called the findings "troubling" and began looking into changes like this proposal.

During a brief debate, state Rep. Matt Blumenthal, D-Stamford, a member of the Judiciary Committee who serves as co-chairman of the Government Administration & Elections Committee, said that another part of the bill would allow the state Freedom of Information Commission to seek civil court injunctions against municipalities that engage in patterns of "wanton misconduct" in responding to public records requests.

"There's been public reporting this year that the fines for certain responding agencies have been essentially treated as the cost of doing business, because currently they are limited to a maximum of \$1,000," Blumenthal said. "If they are assessed, they may not be \$1,000. It may be significantly less. So increasing the fines would allow additional tools for the FOI Commission to enforce



Tyler Sizemore/Hearst Connecticut Media

State Rep. Matt Blumenthal, D-Stamford, co-chairman of the legislative Government Administration & Elections Committee.

violations and to deter unreasonable denials."

"I know there has been concern about the size of the maximum fine," Blumenthal said, promising to possibly redraft the legislation with a lower penalty by the time it reaches the Senate floor in the days before the scheduled midnight, June 7 adjournment of the General Assembly.

"A \$10,000 fine seems a bit large," said Rep. Craig Fishbein of Wallingford, a top Republican on the Judiciary Committee, noting that state statutes allow for court review of such penalties. "Ultimately it's not the individual, it's still the taxpayer who has to pay this fine. Perhaps if it were \$5,000 that would be more tenable."

Rep. Steve Stafstrom, D-Bridgeport, co-chair-

man of the committee, said that as currently written, the bill would allow for cases to be brought by the FOI Commission only in New Britain Superior Court. He is hoping to expand the bill.

"I generally hate those types of provisions," he told the committee. "I think that if the state going to bring an action against, whether it be a local municipality or what have you, it should be in that jurisdiction and not to centralize everything in the Hartford area."

Bridgeport officials recently complained that they in inundated with FOIA requests. Projections for the city's current budget year, which ends on June 30, is about 2,167 requests for public documents, four times the 544 requests in 2017.